



INL bus driver Phyllis Delgado is the first female bus driver to achieve 1 million safe professional driving miles while working at INL.

INL bus driver first female to reach important milestone

by [John Howze](#), INL Communications & Governmental Affairs

Phyllis Delgado recently made Idaho National Laboratory history.

Only months away from her expected retirement, Delgado became the first woman at INL to achieve 1 million safe professional driving miles. She drives a passenger bus delivering employees to and from work at the Naval Reactors Facility (NRF). Miles are totaled annually, and as of Dec. 31, 2010, Delgado had logged 1.06 million safe miles.

INL began providing bus service to the Site in 1951. Since then, 52 bus drivers have reached the million-safe-miles mark. However, in the early years of the laboratory, there were few female drivers. Today, 20 of the 92 bus drivers are women.

"This shows how far we've come in the 60 years that [INL Bus Operations](#) has been here," said Scott Lyman, Bus Operations manager. "Phyllis is among our best drivers. She came on board in a time when there were fewer female bus drivers. That said, we expect in the future to have many more female drivers reach the million-mile mark."

Delgado reached this historic milestone because she really liked working at the laboratory.

"I love my job," she said. "I've always felt privileged to have this job. And it's been a fabulous job. I just keep pushing my retirement back."

"I have really enjoyed several aspects of my work here. One is my passengers. I've had a lot of good passengers over the years and made many friends among my passengers."

"Another is the camaraderie among the drivers and all the support people associated with Bus Operations," she said. "I especially appreciate the mechanics for being out there when it's 20 below zero and starting our buses for us when they won't start – and for keeping them in safe running condition. We've got really good mechanics."

The milestone is more remarkable because of the strict definition of safe driving that INL drivers adhere to. If you so much as get a scratch on your bus that requires a bit of paint, you've had an "accident" and your miles for that entire year are not counted toward the safe driving total. One year that happened to her, Delgado recalled.

"In about 1990, I broke a tail light on my bus," she said. "None of the miles I drove that year count toward my million-mile total."

Delgado drives to the NRF and back (known as a "turn-around run") 11 times a week (twice daily on Monday through Thursday, and three times each Friday). She drives one of the new J coach buses.

"They are just fantastic," she says. "To me, it's just a dream come true. I didn't think I'd work here long enough to get a new bus. It's wonderful."

Delgado developed her driving skills growing up in the Osgood area on the family farm where she drove trucks and tractors. Later, she began driving a school bus in that area for Idaho Falls School District 91.



These MCI (Motor Coach Industries) J model buses, added in early 2007, are the newest members of the INL bus fleet.

In her time, she's driven through blizzards, dust storms, high winds and the billowing smoke of range fires to get her passengers safely to and from work.

She began at the laboratory as an "extra board" driver, someone who takes available assignments to fill in for drivers who are on vacation. Today, she is 10th on the list of active INL drivers for time of service.



This Eagle model bus was part of the INL bus fleet when Delgado started work nearly 30 years ago.

"When I began, they were still using the old Eagle buses," she said. "A lot of times, you'd have to drive with a rag in your hand, and be wiping the fog and frost off the windshield as you drove.

"I've stood sailors to town, too." That turn of speech refers to the days when the number of Navy personnel on the Site filled buses beyond their seating capacity – requiring some sailors to stand up in the aisle the entire way home from NRF. "We would never do that now," she said.

Did she ever have doubts about her choice of career?

"I've had moments," she said. "In blizzards, sometimes it's scary. You just have to slow down and assess the situation and drive one mile at a time. Bus driving has had its ups and downs – we all do. And it's changed over the years. But overall, it's been a real adventure."

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